



SR 167 HOT Lanes questions

What are the SR 167 HOT Lanes?

The SR 167 high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes are HOV lanes (for carpools of two or more, vanpools and buses) that are also open to solo drivers who choose to pay a toll. Toll rates adjust electronically to ensure that traffic in the HOT lane is free flowing (at least 45 miles per hour 90 percent of the time) even when the regular lanes are congested. The four-year Pilot Project provides toll-free express trips for buses, vanpools, carpools of two or more and motorcycles, while giving solo drivers the option to pay for a faster, more reliable trip when they need it the most.

Why SR 167?

HOT lanes help make better use of available space in the HOV lanes without reducing the level of service enjoyed by carpools and bus riders. SR 167 was selected for the HOT lane pilot project because, unlike most HOV lanes in the region which operate near capacity during peak commute times, the HOV lanes on SR 167 had available space during peak periods. In addition, SR 167 runs north and south, connecting communities between Renton and Tacoma, and provides the Puget Sound region with an alternative route to I-5.

What is the purpose of the SR 167 HOT lanes pilot project?

The purpose of this pilot project is to learn how HOT lanes and other forms of variable tolling could be used in Washington State to make our highways operate more efficiently by moving more people and vehicles, and by reducing congestion.

Who may use HOT lanes?

- HOV drivers still have priority to use the lanes without charge
- Drivers with a Good To Go! pass have the option to pay to use the HOT lane for a more reliable trip
- Motorcycles may use the lane at no charge

How have SR 167 drivers benefited?

- Since the project started, traffic speeds and volumes have increased in both the general purpose and HOT lanes saving drivers up to eight minutes during rush hour (7-8 a.m. and 4-5 p.m.)
- Since opening HOT lanes in May 2008, northbound morning peak period and southbound afternoon peak period traffic is moving more cars and people more efficiently.
 - Northbound morning peak general purpose traffic volumes remained constant, but speeds increased by 3 percent.
 - Northbound HOT lane traffic volumes increased by 25 percent, but travel speeds have remained at the speed limit of 60 mph.

- Southbound afternoon peak general purpose traffic volumes increased by 5%, but speeds have increased by 19 percent.
- Southbound HOT lane traffic volumes remained constant with speeds remaining at the speed limit of 60 mph.

What do SR 167 HOT lanes users think?

Based on WSDOT's 2010 SR 167 HOT Lanes Customer Survey:

- Over 90 percent of customers are somewhat or very likely to pay to use the system again.
- Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed agreed that HOT lanes should be opened on other freeways in our region.
- 85 percent said they would use the HOT lanes to make a faster trip when they really needed to get somewhere faster.

How to Use the HOT Lanes

How do I use the SR 167 HOT lanes?

Drivers who want to use the SR 167 HOT lanes as a solo driver must have a *Good To Go!* account. Carpools, vanpools and transit do not need a Good To Go! account and may use the lanes at no charge.

When a solo driver with a valid Good To Go! pass enters the HOT lanes, an overhead sensor reads the driver's pass and electronically debits the toll from the driver's pre-paid account.

Even though vehicles may pass through several access points, a single toll is charged for each trip in the SR 167 HOT lanes. Each solo driver pays the toll price displayed on an electronic sign over the roadway when they first enter the HOT lane. Even if the toll price increases or decreases before the vehicle exits the HOT lane, the driver pays the toll amount that was displayed upon first entering the HOT lane each trip. Get more information about how HOT lanes work by visiting the project Web page:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Tolling/SR167HotLanes/userguide.htm>

How do I establish a *Good To Go!* account?

Drivers can establish a *Good To Go!* account:

- online at <http://wsdot.gov/GoodToGo>,
- by phone by calling customer service (1-866-936-8246)
- in person at one of the [three area Customer Service Centers](#).

Do I have to have a *Good To Go!* account to use the HOT lanes?

No, not if you are in a carpool of two or more people or driving a motorcycle. Solo drivers wanting to use the HOT lanes will need a *Good To Go!* account.

What if I am in a carpool? How do I prevent a charge to my *Good to Go!* account?

WSDOT has a Pass specifically for those who may carpool in the HOT lane, or also use other tolled facilities. The Switchable Pass allows drivers to turn their Pass off when they have carpool status. If you have a permanent Sticker Pass in your windshield, you will need to shield the Pass so you are not charged the toll. *Good To Go!* shields are available for customers who carpool on SR 167. Shields attach to the windshield using Velcro, and center over the Pass on the interior of the windshield to prevent a toll transaction. Shields cost \$3.23 each (sales tax not included) and can be purchased by:

- [Accessing your online account](#) and purchasing via the web
- Calling customer service (1-866-936-8246)
- [Emailing customer service](#)
- Visiting one of the [three area Customer Service Centers](#).
- Mail (P.O. Box 300321, Seattle, WA 98103), or by fax (206-547-0496)
- [View Pass shield installation instructions online](#)

Can I shield my license plate Pass when carpooling in the HOT Lane?

No. There is no way to prevent a license plate mounted Pass from being read and charged a toll when it is used on the SR 167 HOT lanes. If you carpool in the HOT Lanes, one of our [other Passes](#) would be a better option.

However, many vehicle manufacturers now leave a space on the windshield free of any obstructing material so Passes can be used even with specialized windshields. Please contact customer service for additional information.

What are the HOT Lanes hours of operation?

The SR 167 HOT lanes operate between 5 a.m. and 7 p.m. seven days a week. Overnight (7 p.m. to 5 a.m.) the HOT lanes are open to all drivers. No Passes are necessary and no tolls are charged.

Are motorcycles with a *Good To Go!* Pass charged a toll in the HOT lane?

No. Motorcyclists may use the HOT Lane toll free. Motorcyclists with a *Good To Go!* Pass affixed to their headlight do not need to shield the Pass. Drivers must contact the customer service center and ensure their vehicle and Pass are flagged in the system as a motorcycle. The system is then able to filter out Pass reads for motorcycles.

Can commercial vehicles and vehicles with trailers use the HOT lane?

No. Trucks or vehicles over 10,000 lbs gross vehicle weight are not allowed to use the HOT lanes.

Can I use *Good to Go!* on other tolled facilities?

Yes, your *Good To Go!* account can be used on all tolled facilities in Washington state, including the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and SR 520 bridge when tolling begins this spring.

Why are Pass readers over both the HOT lanes and the general purpose lanes?

There are two sets of Pass readers installed at each tolling location along SR 167 in the HOT lane corridor. The two sets of readers enable the system to pinpoint the exact lane location of a pass. This prevents vehicles with Passes traveling outside the HOT lanes from being mistakenly tolled, and tolls post to accounts only for customers in the HOT Lanes.

Toll Costs and Revenue

How much does a solo driver pay to use the SR 167 HOT lanes?

Check out the [toll rates page](#) for more information.

The price for a solo driver to enter the HOT lane changes throughout the day based on real time traffic data. SR 167 HOT lane toll rates increase when traffic is heavy and decrease when traffic is light. Variable tolls ensure that traffic always moves smoothly in the HOT lanes at speeds of at least 45 mph 90 percent of the time. The average toll is between \$0.75 and \$1.00.

How much revenue is generated from SR 167 HOT lanes tolls?

Revenue from HOT lanes is growing steadily. HOT lanes are averaging \$50,000 per month in revenue since June 2010, a nearly 50 percent increase from the year one average of \$26,000. Revenue from HOT lanes covers approximately 50 percent of operating costs and is expected to completely cover operating costs by early 2011.

How does WSDOT use toll revenue generated from the HOT lanes?

All toll revenue collected from the SR 167 HOT lanes is used to maintain and operate SR 167.

Does SR 167 toll revenue cover the costs to maintain and operate the HOT lanes?

When the pilot project was established, revenues were not anticipated to cover these costs initially. The purpose of the project was to use available lane space and help WSDOT learn how to operate a HOT lane system. Revenues are increasing as more solo drivers pay a toll to use the SR 167 HOT lanes. WSDOT is currently taking measures to lower the HOT Lanes Pilot Project's operating costs. The agency awarded a contract to build a statewide customer service center to support all current and future Washington State tolling facilities, including the HOT lanes. This action will centralize all customer service activities and lower operating costs.

Rules for Using the SR 167 HOT Lanes

General Signs

Signs are posted along the entire 10 mile HOT lanes corridor between Renton and Auburn indicating that the far left lane is a HOT lane and is open only to carpools of two people or more, vanpools, transit, motorcycles and solo drivers who pay the electronic toll.

Approaching Access Zone Signs

Signs are posted about one-half mile before every HOT lane access zone telling drivers that they are approaching an access point. There are six access zones in the northbound lanes and four access zones in the southbound lanes.

Access Zone Entrance Signs

An electronic sign is posted at the beginning of each access zone indicating the current toll price. The system calculates a new toll rate every five minutes. Signs are posted to allow solo drivers sufficient time to decide if they want to pay the toll and enter the HOT lane.

The entrance sign will show a toll amount based on the level of traffic in the HOT lane. If traffic in the HOT lane becomes too congested, the sign will switch to "HOV ONLY," indicating that the lane is closed to all solo drivers, including those with transponders.

During overnight hours when HOT lanes are not operating (7 p.m. to 5 a.m.), the sign will read OPEN TO ALL. No Pass is necessary to use the lanes at this time.

When there's an emergency that blocks the HOT lanes, the sign will switch to "CLOSED," indicating that the lane is closed to all traffic. All vehicles in the HOT lanes must exit at the next access zone.

No Crossing Double White Line Signs

This sign reminds drivers that it is illegal to cross the solid double white line that separates the HOT lanes from the two general purpose lanes. Access in and out of the HOT lanes is restricted to access zones, which are marked by signs and a single dashed line. Breaking this law may result in fines of \$124 or more.

Future of SR 167 HOT lanes

Are there plans to extend the SR 167 HOT lanes?

It will take legislative authorization to continue operation of the SR 167 HOT lanes after the pilot project ends in May 2012. If WSDOT receives authority to continue using HOT lanes on SR 167, the southbound HOT lane will be extended south to 8th St E. If authority is not granted, an HOV lane will be built instead. This project is scheduled to be advertised for construction in 2012 and completed in December 2014.

What are the plans to expand HOT lanes beyond on SR 167?

In 2009, the Washington State Legislature directed WSDOT to prepare a traffic and revenue study for the Eastside Corridor, which includes parts of Snohomish, King and Pierce counties, stretching approximately 50 miles down I-405 and SE 167 from Lynnwood to Puyallup. WSDOT reviewed five options that incrementally build a continuous express toll lane system for the 50+ mile Eastside Corridor. If implemented, WSDOT could provide up to two express toll lanes on I-405 that connect to the lanes already established on SR 167. The study's Executive Advisory Group recommended moving forward with construction of a 40+ mile express toll lane system from the King/Pierce County line to Lynnwood along I-405. To move forward with this strategy, WSDOT needs legislative authorization and federal approval.

How would the one-lane SR 167 HOT lanes operate with a two-lane I-405 express toll lane system?

The operation of a two-lane I-405 system connecting to the existing SR 167 HOT lanes would depend on multiple unknown factors. While WSDOT is studying the feasibility of a HOT lanes or express toll lane system for the entire I-405/SR 167 Corridor, it is too early to determine specifics of how this system would operate.

Enforcement

How are the HOT lanes enforced?

The Washington State Patrol provides enforcement for the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project. The fine for illegally driving in a HOT lane or crossing the solid double-white lines is \$124. Drivers may report HOT lanes violators [online](#) or by calling 1-877-764-HERO.

HOT Lanes across the Nation

Has this been tried anywhere else? Was it successful?

HOT lanes systems are growing in popularity across the nation. Miami, Denver, Minneapolis, San Diego, Orange County, Salt Lake City and Houston all currently employ toll lanes to help ease congestion and collect revenue for future projects. Orange County's SR 91, for example, started as a 10 mile HOT lane system that voters approved to extend an addition 10 more miles into Riverside County.